1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Milwaukee City Hall

Other Name/Site Number: N/A

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 200 E. Wells Street Not for publication:

City/Town: Milwaukee Vicinity:

State: WI County: Milwaukee Code: 079 Zip Code: 53202

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	___	Building(s):	X
Public-Local:	X	District:	
Public-State:	___	Site:	
Public-Federal:	___	Structure:	
		Object:	

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	___	buildings
___	___	sites
___	___	structures
___	___	objects
1	0	Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ Entered in the National Register
___ Determined eligible for the National Register
___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
___ Removed from the National Register
___ Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Government	Sub:	City hall
Current:	Government	Sub:	City hall

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Late Victorian/Renaissance: German Renaissance Revival

Materials:

Foundation:	Stone (Limestone)
Walls:	Stone (Granite, Sandstone), Brick
Roof:	Stone (Slate), Metal (Copper), Asphalt, Synthetics (Rubber)
Other:	Terra Cotta, Metal

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Milwaukee City Hall is a civic building located in downtown Milwaukee on the east side of the Milwaukee River. Encompassing an irregularly-shaped city block, this steel-framed structure with self-supporting masonry bearing walls is an asymmetrical, wedge-shaped building composed of two distinct elements: the tall clock tower at the south end, and the main body of the building to the north. It is horizontally divided into three bands of predominant material: a base of granite and sandstone, a middle band of brick and terra cotta, and an ornate roof structure featuring brick Flemish dormers with terra cotta detailing. The main body is a full eight stories plus a basement and attic, and the south tower rises several stories above the main building to a full height of 393 feet from the sidewalk to the top of the flagpole. Designed in a style commonly called German Renaissance Revival, its curved gable dormers and terra cotta ornamentation are reminiscent of the Northern Renaissance Revival architecture of Germany.

Site

Milwaukee City Hall's footprint covers an irregular, trapezoidal-shaped city block bounded on the south by East Wells Street, on the east by North Market Street, on the north by East Kilbourn Avenue, and on the west by North Water Street. The angle of North Water Street, which follows the curve of the nearby Milwaukee River, dictates the shape of this city block.

The site and surrounding area are generally flat with a slight slope to the west and riverfront. Currently, a consistent-width concrete sidewalk surrounds the building, abutting the streets with a concrete curb. The original specifications called for concrete laid in five to six-foot wide sections imitating limestone flagging, a relatively innovative treatment for the building's period of construction. In the 1920s, the sidewalks were replaced with poured-in-place reinforced concrete matched to the original brick arches and exterior stone walls.

North Water Street provides a strong axis and view toward City Hall from the south. At the time of construction, the small triangular space formed by the angle of North Water Street and East Wells Street was renamed "City Hall Square" and constituted an important public space. The pedestrian walk and street turned under the south tower, forming a porte-cochere for the use of horse-drawn vehicles and early automobiles. The porte-cochere continued in use until circa 1919 when the sidewalk was extended south to Wells Street. The City Seal now sits on a circular plinth under the porte-cochere. "City Hall Square" has since disappeared with the re-routing of streets around the site. The open walk immediately south of the building currently contains a circular concrete raised flower bed.

Exterior

The south elevation measures 57 feet 6 inches in width with three bays, the east elevation measures 315 feet 4 ½ inches in width and the west elevation measures 327 feet 9 inches in width, both with nineteen bays including the tower, and the north elevation measures 112 feet 1 ½ inches in width with six bays. The central three bays and the northern three bays of the east and west elevations are stepped out, with the projecting bays on the northern portion of the west elevation slightly curved.

The building rests on 2,584 pine pilings driven into the marshy soil. The below grade masonry is Wauwatosa limestone, while above grade honed-finish gray granite extends the foundation up to the basement window lintels.

Sandstone from the Berea formation, near Amherst, Ohio, faces the base of the building with the sandstone terminating at a continuous cornice line between the second and third floors. Along the main bays of the east and west elevations, the basement, first and second floor windows are recessed between arcaded sandstone piers. The central projecting bays that define the west entrance feature a two-story, triple-arched entry carried on heavy piers at the outer corners with paired columns of polished gray granite flanking each entry door.

The bays of the projecting east entrance, the entire north pavilion, and the south tower have slightly different arrangements. At the east entrance, single-story paired columns of polished granite flank the entry doors, with paired windows separated by stone piers at the second floor. At the north pavilion, window and door openings are recessed behind single-story arcaded openings carried on heavy piers. The south tower features an open porte-cochere with a single massive arch on each elevation. Throughout the sandstone base, decorative stone capitals top the piers and columns, and carved-in-place blocks representing eagles and cherubs anchor the stringcourses between the first and second floors.

Above the sandstone base, a central band of red brick and terra cotta masonry encompass the next five stories. The outermost wythe is a pink-brown face press brick, manufactured by the St. Louis Hydraulic Press[ed] Brick Company. The inner backup masonry behind the press brick (as well as the terra cotta and sandstone) is a cream-colored brick generally referred to as Milwaukee Cream City brick. The face brick is tied to the backup brick with a press brick header at every fifth course.

The main body of the building features window openings recessed between four-story high piers topped with decorative capitals and arcades. Decorative terra cotta balustrades originally fronted the openings at the third floor level on all four elevations. Most of these balustrades were removed in the 1910s and remain only on the north pavilion. Decoratively molded terra cotta spandrels further define the central projecting bays, north pavilion and south tower. Above the four-story arcaded bays, the seventh story changes to a tripartite window configuration with brick column mullions flanked by heavy piers, all with decorative capitals. This story is topped with a plain frieze band and deep cornice decorated with dentil molding and ornate modillions.

The central band at the south tower, although similar in form, has several key differences in detailing. Here, the four corner piers are massive and polygonal, and the three recessed bays on each side are separated by piers topped with flat lintels rather than arcades. The seventh floor windows have column mullions, but are paired rather than tripled. The tower is connected to the rest of the building by the continuation of the frieze band and deep cornice line above the seventh floor.

On the main body of the building, the seventh floor cornice separates the central band of the building from the ornate roof. The eave line of the steeply pitched roof is interrupted at regular intervals by Flemish dormers containing the eighth floor windows and simple bands of dentil molding. The central projecting bays of the east and west elevations and the north pavilion are surmounted by larger Flemish dormers that include attic-level arched windows, ornate moldings, and decorative balustrades (the two large central dormers were truncated sometime in the 1920s and rebuilt in the 1970s). The main roof rises to a copper coping at a trapezoidal shaped

flat roof over the center of the building. The hipped roof of the north pavilion is capped by a lantern that echoes the lantern of the south tower.

The monumental polygonal piers of the south tower rise five stories above the seventh story-cornice and the roof of the main building. Directly above the main cornice is the eighth floor balcony railing with decorative terra cotta panels. The eighth and ninth floor levels feature rectangular piers between bays, recessed spandrels, and column mullions. Above the ninth floor is a terra cotta frieze decorated with dragons and a short clerestory zone. The tenth floor is an open promenade with grouped columns and arches on all four sides. The tenth level houses the bell chamber with the 11 ½ ton bell hung within. Above the arches are several decorative terra cotta bands corresponding to the eleventh floor, and an open balcony defines the twelfth floor. Beyond the twelfth floor lion's head cornice, the copper hipped roof begins. There are clock faces set in Flemish dormers, on all four sides. The hipped roof rises to a circular cupola with balustrade and lantern, topped by a flagpole.

In 1929, a fire severely damaged the upper portions of the south tower roof and lantern. The tower was rebuilt to the original specifications, with exception of the clock faces. Originally constructed of ¾" translucent glass with black painted metal hour marks, pollution rendered the clock faces unreadable from the ground by the late 1920s. During the replacement work, the original clock face frames were rotated fifteen degrees and reinstalled in the masonry opening to form the backup structure to which a new black steel face was bolted. At the location of each new hour mark, two of the minute marks were cut out of the original frame to avoid interference with the new backlighting, but the original clock frame was left mostly intact, as it exists today.

Terra cotta is used throughout the building exterior to embellish and complement the press brick. At all levels above the sandstone base, terra cotta is used to trim window openings and embellish the brick masonry. It caps the dormers and gables of both the tower and the main building and adorns these elements with decorative urns and finials appropriate to its architectural style. At the third, eighth, and ninth levels, terra cotta balustrades are a distinctive decorative feature at selected window openings.

Windows and Doors

The windows in City Hall are typically wood double-hung sash in wood frames, with a distinctive exterior brick mold and simple interior casing. Several floors have fixed arched or rectangular wood transoms above the double-hung operable sash. Most windows retain their original treatment, with the exception of the basement windows at grade, which have been removed and the openings in filled with brick painted to match the adjacent sandstone. The original ornamental metal grilles were re-installed in the openings and painted black.

There are three locations where the window types differ from the typical treatment seen on the rest of the building. The first location occurs at the southernmost bay of the east elevation corresponding to the interior vaults. This bay was designed for security windows with a distinctive design that consists of small squares of glass set within a steel frame. The third through fifth floors of this bay also feature decorative terra cotta spandrel panels at mid-floor level.

The second location of atypical window treatment occurs on the north elevation at the third and fourth floors, corresponding to the two-story Common Council Chamber. Tripartite windows in the four central bays on the third floor are surmounted by a gridded pattern of small square openings at the fourth floor. The lower three rows are filled with leaded glass, while the top row is inset with decorative terra cotta.

The third location of atypical window treatments occurs at the two bays near the north end of the east elevation, where the windows have been modified to access an exterior fire escape that extends from the first to the ninth floor. The original construction did not include or anticipate addition of a fire escape, but by the early 1910s this became necessary for life safety. In 1914, two bays near the north end of the east elevation were modified to accommodate the fire escape and provide emergency exits from all levels except the first floor and basement. The configuration and shape of the openings matches the adjacent typical bays. The fire escape window openings are all original, except at the ninth floor, and the windows have retained their original frames, transoms and mullions. In 1969, the original wood sash was removed and replaced with metal sash with inset doors. At the same time, the fire escape was extended to the ninth floor, and an exit door was cut into the ninth floor dormer. The fire escape itself is constructed of wrought iron with ornamental cast-iron railings. The railings at the ninth level were added in 1969 and are plainer than those on the lower floors.

Originally, there were four sets of entrance doors, each centrally located on one of the four elevations. On the south elevation beneath the tower, the entry consists of a pair of swinging doors with sidelights and a transom. On the east elevation, the pair of swinging entry doors is divided by a center mullion and topped with an arched transom. On the west elevation, a set of revolving doors is flanked by pairs of reproduction wood swinging doors with strap hinges. On the north elevation, one pair of swinging doors exists from the original two pair of entrance doors. Windows replaced the west entrance doors on this elevation circa 1931.

Roof

Roofing on both the main building and the two open sections of the tower was originally specified as a composition of felt and asphalt over a cementitious leveling bed on structural clay tile decking. The flat roofs on the tenth and twelfth floors of the tower retain this original composition with additional built-up layers. Currently, the main flat roof consists of a single-ply EPDM membrane (installed in 1997) over an insulation board substrate on top of the older asphalt roofing.

Slate was installed at all dormers and gables and at the large inclined north, east, and west-facing roof. Originally, slate was also installed at the sloped roof of the south tower above the clock gables. The south tower slate was replaced with copper sheets in 1923. The original terra cotta pinnacles at the tower were replaced with copper sheets in 1928. The current slate roof was installed in 1973-74.

The main flat roof has a skylight that allows light into the attic, where an interior laylight filters light into the building's central atrium. Minimal details were provided for the original installation, and since the skylight was restored in 1978 and rebuilt in 1997, there is very little remaining evidence of the original materials and methods of attachment. It appears that the reconstruction was true to the original design intent, with improvements of better-grade steel and (presumed) tempered glass. The skylight frame sits on top of a short clay tile parapet wall. The gable end walls are also constructed of clay tile. An exit door from the attic to the roof is located at the north end.

Originally the main roof and the north pavilion roof were surmounted by ornamental cast-iron cresting. Portions began falling off in the 1950s and eventually the entire cresting was removed. As seen in historic photographs, a stamped or pressed copper cap originally ran along the ridge of the sloped slate roofs below the cast-iron cresting.

A steel chimney originally rose from the north end of the main roof. The abandonment of the original heating system in 1937 rendered it redundant, and it was sold off as scrap metal for the war effort in 1943.

Interior

The building consists of eight full floors above grade plus a basement level, which is partially below grade, and an attic. The interior plan is defined by an irregularly-shaped eight-story central atrium running along the building's north-south axis. Each floor has an inner-ring corridor encircling and overlooking the central light well. Offices and public spaces are arranged around the central atrium, with major departmental interfaces located at the north and south ends of the atrium. Originally, pairs of scagliola-finished columns defined the entrance to the open public areas of the departments, but in most cases the departments have "reclaimed" this area, installing entry doors between or just behind the columns. The main stairs and elevator shafts are clustered centrally on the west side of the building. Multi-story vaults are stacked vertically in three locations in the building. In the 1950s, a tunnel was constructed at the basement level connecting City Hall to the new Municipal Building across East Market Street.

City Hall exhibits many of the decorative and utilitarian finishes typical of late nineteenth-century construction. A hierarchy of finishes existed, with the most ornamental treatments located in public and ceremonial spaces such as the central atrium, corridors, Common Council Chamber and the Mayor's Department; less ornamental finishes in city offices; and more durable, non-decorative treatments in storage and mechanical rooms. The most significant public spaces, such as the atrium and the Common Council Chamber, feature the highest level of interior finishes and have been retained or restored to their original character. For the most part, the general office spaces bear little of their original character due to continual remodeling over the years.

The central atrium and public corridors feature Roman mosaic marble floor tile, plaster walls with Tennessee marble wainscoting, wood-paneled doors with wood trim, and scagliola columns topped with cast plaster Ionic capitals. As seen on construction drawings, an "illuminated" floor on the first floor of the central atrium originally allowed light into the basement level. However, the glass plates were prone to breaking and hard to replace, so in 1907 the Common Council ordered the replacement of the illuminated floor with Roman mosaic tile to match the rest of the floor.

The light well is lined with ornamental metal railings connected to slim metal columns. The light well is topped at the ninth floor with a glass laylight that filters daylight entering from the skylight above. The laylight consists of ornamental pressed glass set in a cast-iron grid supported by wrought-iron beams. The large pieces of glass forming the corners of the laylight are set into a larger grid and ornamental metal strapping. The laylight was restored in 1995.

The Common Council Chamber, located at the north end of the third floor, is the most ornately decorated and finished space in City Hall. The Chamber is a two-story room that originally had an open gallery, later enclosed and captured for office space prior to World War I. The Chamber features its original ornamental plasterwork, which appears to have remained white until 1931 when a decorative painting campaign occurred. This campaign took the theme of "human endeavor and progress" and was designed by Carl Minkley, a former alderman. The Chamber also features decorative wood wainscoting and an ornate oak rostrum located along the north wall, with leaded and stained glass windows

providing the backdrop. The rostrum is depicted on the east wall in the original drawings, but early photographs show it in its current position, and there is no evidence that it was ever located on the east wall. The Common Council Chamber underwent restoration in 1991.

Although it has not yet benefited from a restoration campaign like those in the central atrium and Common Council Chamber, the Mayor's Department, located on the second floor, was also a significant space that originally featured Roman mosaic marble tile flooring, scagliola columns and ornamental plaster cornices. The offices within the Mayor's Department are currently characterized by dropped ceilings, carpeting and modern office partitions. However, most of the original ornamental finishes, such as the wood and marble mosaic tile floors and plaster cornices, remain concealed beneath carpeting and above acoustical ceilings, in good condition with the potential for restoration.

Milwaukee City Hall retains a high degree of integrity. The exterior is mostly intact. Some exterior features have been lost due to redundancy or maintenance issues, however the most significant of these features (the clipped gables, for example), have since been restored. Other exterior changes, such as the fire escape installation and partial balustrade removal, do not significantly affect the building's overall character. The restoration plan for the building calls for the replication of missing character-defining features like the iron cresting along the roof, in addition to preserving the remaining historic fabric.

The interior has seen more loss of original fabric than the exterior. Alterations to the interior began almost immediately after the building's completion and continued throughout its history. In the early years, these changes reflected both the completion of spaces that had only been roughed out during construction and the alteration of interior arrangements or features when it became evident that the space as designed was unworkable. As the years went on, alterations continued whenever necessary as the functions and volume of work for each department evolved. For the most part, interior remodeling followed the original design intent until the early 1930s. After that period, the need to maximize space and changing fashions resulted in remodeling that at times compromised the original character of the interior spaces. The most extensive alterations occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the completion of the new Municipal Building across the street led to the "modernization" of the interior of the old City Hall, affecting the important public space of the central atrium. Fortunately, many of these changes were reversed in the early 1980s, with the restoration of the central atrium and the Common Council Chambers, the two key public spaces within City Hall.

Today, several of the key rooms and offices within City Hall remain in their original locations and uses, including the Common Council Chamber, Mayor's Department, City Clerk's Office, and Treasurer's Office. The majority of the general office spaces retain little or no original fabric. As in the Mayor's office mentioned previously, these other areas are also characterized by dropped ceilings (covered at the windows to maintain the exterior character of the building), carpeting, and modern office partitions. Historic evidence indicates that most of these non-public areas were not highly ornamented. In the "reclaimed" public areas, column capitals are concealed above dropped ceilings, leaving the potential for future restoration.

Milwaukee City Hall is currently undergoing an extensive exterior restoration campaign designed to repair deteriorated features, address ongoing maintenance issues, and secure the historic envelope of the structure in a manner that respects the original design and materials.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide: _ Locally:

Applicable National Register Criteria:	A X B _ C X D
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):	A _ B _ C _ D _ E _ F _ G
NHL Criteria:	1, 4
NHL Theme(s):	III. Expressing Cultural Values 5. architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design IV. Shaping the Political Landscape 1. parties, protests, and movements
Areas of Significance:	Architecture Ethnic Heritage/German Politics/Government
Period(s) of Significance:	1895-1917
Significant Dates:	1895, 1910, 1916
Significant Person(s):	N/A
Cultural Affiliation:	N/A
Architect/Builder:	Koch, Henry (architect) Riesen, Paul (builder)
Historic Contexts:	XVI. Architecture M. Period Revivals 7. Renaissance VII. Political & Military Affairs, 1865-1939 C. The Progressive Era, 1900-1914

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Summary

Milwaukee City Hall is nationally significant as an unique representation of late Gilded Age Revival architecture, and as the only American city hall to be constructed in the German Renaissance Revival style. It remains as one of the largest city halls in the country. It is also nationally significant for its central role in the history of Socialism in the United States during its "Golden Age." In addition, the building also has symbolism as the "capitol building" of the city most associated with German immigrant culture in the United States. City Hall has served for over 100 years as the seat of city government in Milwaukee, and as such, it is the public face of the city and the visual symbol of the many important roles that Milwaukee played in American history.

City Hall was the key to the Socialist movement in Milwaukee. The Socialist Party was particularly strong in Milwaukee during Socialism's "Golden Age" prior to World War I, and some of the Party's greatest successes came in that city. In 1910 Milwaukee City Hall became the first among big cities in America to be run by Socialists, chiefly because the Milwaukeeans' brand of socialism focused on municipal politics. Victories in Milwaukee were looked to nationally as models for future successes, and City Hall served as the training ground for national Socialist leaders like Victor Berger and Emil Seidel.

The style of architecture for the City Hall is also a visible reminder that Milwaukee was the capital of German immigration in the United States. Not only did large numbers come to Milwaukee, representing the full geographic and social spectrum of German immigrants, but Milwaukee became the place most consciously German in America, the center of ethnic German culture, politics, and society. City Hall, constructed during the height of German dominance of the city, was designed, built, and traditionally run by Germans. The German-influenced architecture of City Hall is reflective of that ethnic heritage in America's "Deutsch-Athen."

History

The city of Milwaukee was chartered in 1846, and the city officers occupied a variety of rented or adapted quarters for the following fifty years. A burgeoning population and continual additions to the responsibilities of the civic government meant that the city was constantly outgrowing those quarters. The first resolution for the construction of a purpose-built city hall came in 1882, but sectional rivalries within the city delayed final approval of a site. The current site was finally chosen as the result of a compromise in February of 1890. Originally a "useless swamp" that Milwaukee founder Solomon Juneau platted and purchased from the government in 1835, the parcel of land east of the Milwaukee River included the city's former Market Hall that the city adapted into offices and a municipal court in 1860. Between the original 1882 resolution and the selection of the site in 1890, the estimated cost of the proposed building had nearly doubled from $350,000 to $600,000.

After studying how other cities had built city halls, the Milwaukee Common Council decided to hold a nationwide design competition. Plans were submitted in December of 1892. The competition eventually centered on two architects: Henry Ives Cobb of Chicago, who had submitted a self-described "Gothic" style design, and Henry C. Koch, a German-born Milwaukee architect, whose design drew on German and

Milwaukee precedents. After several months of acrimonious debate, the Common Council voted to accept the plan of the Milwaukee architect.

Construction of the hall was further delayed by the late submittal of Koch's construction drawings and another drawn-out battle over the selection of a general contractor, which was finally settled with the awarding of the contract to a local builder, the German-born Paul Riesen. Foundation piles were first driven in June of 1893. Despite the backdrop of a national depression and labor unrest, throughout the period of construction the Common Council upgraded and improved the building's finishes and mechanical and electrical system, with the goal of making it "one of the Finest Structures in the Whole Northwest." Including construction costs and furnishings, the final cost of the building was $1,016,935, making City Hall Milwaukee's first "million dollar building."

Although the building officially opened for use in December of 1895 with six finished floors, the 11 ½ ton bell, inscribed with a short verse and the names of the mayor and other city officials, was hoisted into place on December 31st of 1896, and first rung at midnight to mark the New Year. The final build-out of the interior, as well as the minor renovations that addressed design flaws, occurred over the next 20 years.[1]

Architectural Significance: "One of the Finest Structures in the Whole Northwest"

Even to the end of the American Civil War, the architectural form of city halls had changed little since their origin in twelfth century Europe.[2] The classic arrangement of a first-floor open market and second-floor multipurpose assembly room served the relatively limited needs of city governments in Europe and Colonial America. Even the significant growth of cities after the Revolutionary War had little effect on the basic organization of city government. The internal arrangement of city halls did not change, although outwardly their architecture followed current fashions, including Federal and Greek Revival. Other city halls that have been designated as National Historic Landmarks which follow this early precedent are the 1811 City Hall in New York City (NHL, 1960); the 1820 City Hall for the District of Columbia (NHL, 1960); the 1845 Gallier Hall in New Orleans, Louisiana (NHL, 1974) which was used as New Orlean's city hall; and the 1856-57 City Hall in Mobile, Alabama (NHL, 1973).

The end of the Civil War ushered in the Gilded Age in America and although the form of city government saw little change at first, the party bosses and political machines stepped into the power vacuum created earlier in the century. Party bosses are usually associated with widespread corruption and graft, but their absolute control resulted in the provision of services that had been impossible with weak city governments. Post-Civil War cities started to build monumental city halls to reflect the pretentiousness of their new wealth and to provide tangible rewards for the cronies of city bosses. These city halls were designed to occupy prominent central spaces in the city and to dwarf their neighbors. Popular Gilded Age city hall architectural styles included Second Empire and Richardsonian Romanesque. Built in these two popular architectural styles, and designated as National Historic Landmarks for their outstanding architectural design are the: 1862-65 French Second Empire style Old City Hall in Boston, Massachusetts (NHL, 1970); the 1894 High Victorian Gothic Old City

[1] Historical information on Milwaukee City Hall is drawn from the original specifications, contemporary newspaper accounts, original and renovation drawing files held by the City of Milwaukee Building and Fleets Division, and a compilation of historical data, deeds to the City Hall Site, and transcriptions of Common Council Proceedings related to City Hall from 1882 to 1937, produced by the Works Projects Administration in 1939-40.

[2] William Lebovich, *America's City Halls* (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1984), 14-24.

Hall in Richmond, Virginia (NHL, 1971); the 1901 Second Empire Philadelphia City Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (NHL, 1976); and the 1864-66 Old City Hall in Salt Lake City, Utah (NHL, 1975).

At the beginning of the Gilded Age the interior arrangement of city halls remained the same, with the market/assembly combination still being used. However, toward the end of the period a need for greater services due to increased size and population, as well as technological advances, resulted in changes in the internal structure of city halls. A greater variety of city officials were elected or appointed, and these officials were increasingly trained and paid professionals. The industrialization of cities led to a decreased emphasis upon the market aspect of city halls; the first floor markets were converted to offices, and the assembly halls turned into court and common council chambers. Work space was needed for a greater number of specialized officers and with access for citizens to conduct business.

The end of the nineteenth century has been called a symbolic watershed for American urban history. The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago redirected the form of American architecture and urban planning, while the following years saw a greater reform movement directed at the corruption witnessed in municipal governments. The early 1900s saw the growth of "civic centers," government buildings placed within groups and contextually related.

Milwaukee City Hall, designed in 1891, belongs to the end of the Gilded Age tradition in contrast to the post-Columbian Exposition era. It stood magnificently alone on its site and towered over its contemporaries. While its style is unique among city halls of the era, it relates to the Revivalist tradition of the Gilded Age, the Beaux-Arts style, made popular by the Columbian Exposition.

With a height of 393 feet, Milwaukee City Hall was the third tallest structure in the country at the time of its construction, followed only by the Philadelphia City Hall and the Washington Monument.[3] At nine stories tall and 107,270 square feet, it remains today as one of the largest city halls in the country. The Common Council Chamber alone is nearly 8,000 square feet in area, perhaps the largest in the country. It exceeds in size the chambers of cities with larger populations, such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston and Cleveland, and even the chamber of the United States House of Representatives.[4] In addition, the City Hall is still in use for its original function.

Architect Henry C. Koch, not particularly innovative in terms of style, was adept in interpreting current architectural fashions and adapting them to the needs of his clients while using local materials. He worked in the popular styles of his age: Italianate, Gothic, Second Empire, and Romanesque. As a German-born architect living in Milwaukee, Koch's design for City Hall is perhaps not unexpected. The style, often called Flemish Renaissance because of the prominently featured Flemish dormers, is actually drawn from German precedent and is more correctly known as German Renaissance Revival. There were, however, other models in Milwaukee that also influenced Koch's design.[5]

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[3] *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 16, 1895.

[4] Charles T. Goodsell, *The Social Meaning of Civic Space: Studying Political Authority through Architecture* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 59, 105. Goodsell also claims that the rostrum in the Milwaukee chamber "…is perhaps the best example of a secular reredos in the United States," (78).

[5] The most complete treatment of Koch's life and work is in William O'Brien, "Milwaukee Architect: Henry C. Koch," (M.A. Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1989).

Evidence suggests that Koch paid close attention to architectural trends and developments within his field,[6] and that he must have been familiar with the design of the "Rathaus" or City Hall of Hamburg, Germany. When design of the Rathaus began in 1880 (it was not completed until 1897), the architects faced similar problems to those posed in Milwaukee. Like the Milwaukee site, the ground chosen for the Hamburg Rathaus was marshy. At both sites, wooden piles were drawn into the ground to serve as footings, in order to solve this problem.

In form and style, there are many striking similarities between the buildings. The proportions of tower to main block are equivalent. The towers are also similar in size and form. While the Hamburg Rathaus has a central tower, the towers in both buildings are placed in relation to important adjacent public spaces. The Rathaus tower (at 367 feet) is slightly shorter than the City Hall tower (at 393 feet), but both utilize a tripled arched-window arrangement, Flemish gables silhouetted against a steep roof, and finials or flagpoles. Both buildings employ a tripartite arrangement of floors, with a heavy or rusticated street level section, a more formal central section, and a row of Flemish dormers piercing a steeply-pitched roofline above the cornice. Both have projecting bays topped by large Flemish gables, and the roofs of each were originally surmounted by iron cresting, although this feature has since been lost on City Hall. While there are some important design differences between the buildings, the form and ornamental detailing is similar enough to suggest with some certainty that the design of the Hamburg Rathaus had an impact on Koch's submission for the City Hall competition.

Koch's was not the first German Renaissance Revival-inspired building in Milwaukee. In the two years prior to Koch's submission for the City Hall competition, two important buildings, ironically designed by American-born architects, were built in the German Renaissance Revival style. The first was the Pabst Mansion, commissioned by Captain Frederick Pabst in 1889, and designed by Milwaukee architect George Bowman Ferry of Ferry and Clas. Although its form hardly resembles that of City Hall, the prominent use of Flemish gables silhouetted against a steeply pitched roof would become a characteristic feature of the Milwaukee style.

Several months before the City Hall design competition opened, the cornerstone was laid for another Pabst-commissioned building in the German Renaissance Revival style. The Pabst Building, designed by Chicago architect Solon Beman, was the headquarters of both the Pabst Brewing Company and the Wisconsin National Bank. Considered Milwaukee's first skyscraper, the design of this building would also be familiar to Koch, although his submission for the City Hall competition would come early in the construction phase of the Pabst Building.

Comparison of the two structures reveals significant similarities. Their south-facing towers were of comparable design, although the proportion and relation of the City Hall tower to the rest of the building owes more to its unique site constraints and the Hamburg Rathaus than to the Pabst Building. Both buildings utilized multi-story arcades to enclose the window openings on the rusticated base, and multi-story pilasters supported arches in the central section. The towers were characterized by Romanesque arches at the bases and superstructures reinforced by polygonal corner piers. Above the cornice lines, the Pabst Building, like City Hall, had a steeply-pitched roof fronted with Flemish gables and dormers topped by decorative cresting. Both towers were crowned with white clock faces set within Flemish gables on all four elevations.

[6] Ibid., 10-13.

There were, of course, important differences between the designs of the Pabst Building and City Hall, but the similarities between the buildings are so striking that it suggests Koch consciously drafting his design to complement that of the Pabst Building. This may have been a calculated effort on Koch's part to tap into the fashion for German-inspired architecture at a time when the number of foreign-born Germans in the city had reached its peak. It might also have been homage to the Pabst family's importance to the city. Whatever Koch's original intentions were, the 1980 demolition of the Pabst Building leaves Milwaukee City Hall as the most significant remaining example of the German Renaissance Revival style in the city.

Political Significance: Socialism in Milwaukee

From its opening in late 1895, City Hall became the physical prize in the midst of an increasingly turbulent political atmosphere in Milwaukee. Beginning in the late 1890s with the election of David Rose to the mayor's office, charges of corruption, bribery, and graft grew into a series of indictments against Rose and both Democratic and Republican politicians in the city, resulting in civic outrage. The Socialists were able to capitalize on this indignation to catapult them to their greatest municipal success in the United States.

Marxists first had become active in Milwaukee in the 1870s and 1880s.[7] In the 1890s, several factors led to the emergence of a strong Socialist party in the city. Most importantly, Milwaukee had a robust labor movement, led chiefly by German immigrant workers. The so-called "third wave" of German immigration to the city consisted largely of industrial workers and skilled artisans who had a healthy tradition in the Social Democratic party in Germany and brought a sense of class consciousness to Milwaukee labor that the American movement in general lacked.[8] Socialism seemed a natural outgrowth of labor activism, and organized labor in the city considered the unions to be their economic arm and the Socialists their political arm.[9] It was this fusion of unionism and Socialism that created the early success of the Social Democrat party in Milwaukee.

The Socialists first ran for office in 1898 and only polled 5% of the vote. As revelations of corruption in the traditional political parties grew, support for the Socialist party likewise increased, and in the 1904 elections Socialists received 25% of the mayoral vote and gained nine alderman seats. In those early years, the Milwaukee Socialists were adept at adapting their message for their audience, capitalizing on disaffection with the major parties by moving toward the political center, and appealing to middle-class progressives.[10]

The Socialist campaign against corruption culminated in 1910. In that year, the Milwaukee Socialists achieved the largest victory ever registered in an American city.[11] They swept into City Hall with a Socialist mayor, Emil Seidel, a Common Council majority, and a large number of other city posts. Later that year Milwaukee contributed the first Socialist representative, Victor Berger, to the United States Congress. Despite being hampered in their agenda by a lack of home rule for the city, the city's Socialist government immediately set

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[7] Sally Miller, "The Socialist Party and the 'Old' Immigrants: The Milwaukee Movement to 1920," in Sally Miller, ed., *Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in Early Twentieth Century American Socialism* (New York, New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996), 51.
[8] Sally Miller, "Milwaukee: Of Ethnicity and Labor" in Bruce M. Stave, ed., *Socialism and the Cities* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975), 41-44. This was true in Indianapolis, another stronghold of Germanism and Socialism during the same period. The Socialist Party of America was founded in Indianapolis in 1901, probably in part because party founder Eugene Debs was from Terre Haute, Indiana.
[9] Miller, "The Socialist Party," 53.
[10] Ibid., 58-59.
[11] Miller, "Milwaukee: Of Ethnicity and Labor," 50.

about cleaning up the city government and instituting worker-friendly policies. Seidel's government gained a reputation in the city for honesty, efficiency, and energy, despite being criticized by the left wing of their own party for concentrating on "sewer socialism," at the expense of more lofty party goals.[12]
The Milwaukee success inspired Socialists in other municipalities. Oklahoman Oscar Ameringer, who had participated in Berger's successful Congressional campaign, made a conscious attempt to "Milwaukeeize" Oklahoma City by following the Milwaukee party's strategy of avoiding abstract arguments and keeping "bread and butter questions in the forefront."[13] George R. Lunn visited Milwaukee in 1911 to establish his Socialist credentials and returned to Schenectady, New York to win the mayoral election in that city, even importing his Commissioner of Public Works, Charles Mullen, from Milwaukee. In all, Socialists won over 1200 public offices across the country, including 79 mayoralties, by 1912.[14]

Ironically, the Seidel government's success proved its undoing two years later. With the urgency of perceived corruption eliminated, the Socialists could not prevail at the ballot box against a fusion ticket of their opponents, and lost the Mayor's office as well as their Common Council majority. Although the Socialists would later recapture the Mayor's office and see some modest gains in other city offices, they never achieved the influence they had from 1910-1912, in what became known as the "Golden Age" of Socialism.[15]

As well as being an inspiration and a model for Socialists in other American cities, Milwaukee contributed several key figures to the national movement. The most important was Victor Berger, the Austrian-born "boss" of Milwaukee Socialism. Berger, who at one time served on the Milwaukee Common Council, was a founder of both the local and the national party and was elected six times to the United States House of Representatives. Berger personified "pragmatic Socialism," the system that had worked so well in Milwaukee, and he frequently tried to "Americanize" the party to widen its appeal.[16] Emil Seidel, Milwaukee's first Socialist mayor, was Eugene Debs' running mate on the 1912 Socialist presidential ticket. Other Milwaukeeans who also figured on the national Socialist scene were Frederic F. Heath (one of the few "Yankees" to be prominent in the Milwaukee party), former Milwaukee City Clerk Carl D. Thompson (who headed the national party's Information Department in 1912) and Daniel Hoan, who became Milwaukee's national figure in the Socialist Party following Berger's death in 1929.[17]

The anti-intervention stance of the Socialist party clashed with general American patriotism following the United States' entry into World War I, and the fortunes of the party declined nationally. Although the Socialist presence in Milwaukee remained a factor in politics throughout the 1920s and 30s, it also suffered from the

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[12] Miller, "Milwaukee: Of Ethnicity and Labor," 63; Richard W. Judd, *Socialist Cities: Municipal Politics and the Grass Roots of American Socialism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989), 15.
[13] Garin Burbank, "Socialism in an Oklahoma Boom-town: 'Milwaukeeizing' Oklahoma City," in Bruce M. Stave, ed., *Socialism and the Cities* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975), 100-101.
[14] Bruce M. Stave, ed., *Socialism and the Cities* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975), 4, 10. Judd notes that after the 1910 elections, Milwaukee became "a symbol of Socialist hopes throughout the country." Judd, *Socialist Cities*, 23.
[15] Judd, *Socialist Cities*, 22; Miller, "Milwaukee: Of Ethnicity and Labor," 54. Judd notes that the 1910 and 1912 elections established a pattern in Milwaukee that was duplicated many times in other Socialist cities in America: a stable working-class Socialist constituency, and a progressive bloc that swung first toward the Socialists, then decidedly against them. Judd, *Socialist Cities*, 28.
[16] Miller, *Race, Ethnicity, and Gender*, 53; Judd, *Socialist Cities*, 4.
[17] Miller, "Milwaukee: Of Ethnicity and Labor," 62; Judd, *Socialist Cities*, 58.

added complication of anti-German sentiment working against the German character and membership of the party.[18]

Socialist Daniel Hoan won the Mayor's office in 1916 and held that position until 1940, chiefly due to his reputation for honesty and the efficient running of his government. Hoan did remain faithful to the basic principles of "sewer socialism" particularly the provision of services for the working class. In 1923, Hoan established the Garden Homes, the first low-cost housing project in any American city.[19] After a brief hiatus in the early 1940s, Milwaukee elected another Socialist mayor in 1948, Frank Zeidler, who remained in office until 1960. Although Zeidler's Socialism has been termed merely a "ghostly reminder of a dynamic past,"[20] he nonetheless left Milwaukee with a legacy of Socialist mayors controlling City Hall for nearly 50 years.

Ethnic Heritage: The American "Deutsch-Athen"

Milwaukee City Hall is also a conscious expression of German heritage in the most German-American city in the United States. While cities like St. Louis and Cincinnati also had sizeable contingents of German immigrants, neither city built city halls influenced by German architecture that came to represent "German-ness" to the extent that Milwaukee did. German immigrant culture dominated the city of Milwaukee from City Hall's period of construction until World War I, with its influence remaining visible today.

German immigrants began arriving in Milwaukee in discernible groups starting in the late 1830s, with their numbers increasing exponentially into the 1840s and 1850s, growing into the largest ethnic group in the city by 1860.[21] The immigrants were diverse in terms of religion, regional origin, and economic status, but they were brought together socially and politically by the "Forty-Eighters" – intellectuals and revolutionaries who established cultural and social institutions like the Turners, educational academies, newspapers, and theaters.

The 1890s, the period of design and construction of City Hall, were in many ways the height of German influence in the city. Milwaukee reached its peak of foreign-born Germans, with 27 percent of the population, in 1890. Ethnic Germans dominated all levels of society, from the skilled and unskilled laborers of the working class, up to the millionaire brewers and manufacturers like Pabst and Pfister. The important social and cultural institutions of the city were also dominated by Germans. Turner Hall (NHL, 1996) is an example of an influential Milwaukee institution brought to the United States by the German immigrants. The Germans also constituted the backbone of the newly formed Socialist party which would play such an important role in the city's political future.[22]

In 1886, the city's first German-born mayor, Emil Wallber, deemed a new City Hall "imperative," with the architect and general contractor both being German-born. The building's cornerstone was laid under ethnic German mayor John Koch, and the finished structure was dedicated by another German, Common Council President William Rauschenberger, who also presided as mayor over the first years of the building's working life. The design of the Hall itself drew on German precedent, specifically the Hamburg Rathaus, as well as

[18] Miller, "Milwaukee: Of Ethnicity and Labor," 58-60.
[19] Miller, *Race, Ethnicity, and Gender*, 66.
[20] Miller, "Milwaukee: Of Ethnicity and Labor," 65.
[21] John Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee Historical Society, 1999).
[22] Sally Miller, "The Socialist Party and the 'Old' Immigrants: The Milwaukee Movement to 1920," in Sally Miller, ed., *Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in Early Twentieth Century American Socialism* (New York, New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996), 49.

important Milwaukee buildings modeled in the German style, such as Captain Pabst's mansion and his newly built headquarters, the Pabst Building.

German influence in the city waned after World War I. As new immigration declined, the children of the foreign-born assimilated more readily to traditional American life. This was hastened by anti-German sentiment after America's entry into World War I, when self-conscious Germanism became subject to disapproval and even persecution by so-called "patriots." All facets of ethnic Germanism were attacked, ranging from their language, music, and architecture.

Although Milwaukee would never be the stronghold of ethnic Germans that it was from the late nineteenth century to World War I, it retains a strong legacy of German influence. German beer and cuisine are still highlighted in the city, as are traditional German festivals of culture and music. German surnames are prevalent throughout the city, as well as certain German descriptive words. The effects are also seen in less tangible concepts like that of "Gemutlichkeit," the cozy sense of hospitality and friendliness still promoted in the city that makes it seem like a small community despite its big-city size.[23]

The German impact on Milwaukee is most visibly seen in the remaining German-influenced architecture of the city. Unlike other ethnic groups, who mostly followed American mainstream design in all but their churches, both the Germans and the Poles in Milwaukee favored ethnically influenced architecture for residential, commercial/industrial, and public buildings. German Milwaukeeans also relied more heavily on professional architects than other ethnic groups, leading to a profession that was conversant with German precedent and prepared to cater to the taste of its Milwaukee clients resulting in a large number of residential, religious, commercial/industrial, and public buildings reflecting design elements of native German architecture that gave the city a distinctive Old World character.[24]

The most prolific period in ethnic architecture in Milwaukee was from 1890 to 1915. Structures ranging from modest storefronts and residential buildings to mansions and office buildings were constructed throughout the city. The best-known and most monumental among them were the Pabst Mansion, St. John's Lutheran Church, the Germania Building, the Schlitz and Pabst Breweries, and the Pabst Theater (NHL, 1991). However, the two most monumental buildings in the German style (in terms of size and scale of ornamentation) were the Pabst Building (built in 1891-92) and Milwaukee City Hall. The integrity of the Pabst Building was lost in 1948 with the removal of its distinctive Flemish tower. With the demolition of the building in 1980, City Hall remains as the most visible and monumental representative of Milwaukee's German heritage.[25]

Period of Significance

The period of significance established for City Hall is 1896 to 1917. These dates were chosen as the time during which City Hall achieved its greatest importance in terms of social, political and architectural history. From the late 1890s to the United States' entry into World War I, Milwaukee was at the height of its significance from a political and social standpoint. The Socialist party grew in prominence during this period, culminating in the Socialist sweep of city government in 1910 and the subsequent election of Daniel Hoan as

[23] John Gurda, "America's Most German-American City: Milwaukee Looks Back on Its Legacy as the Deutsch-Athen," *German Life* (December 1996/January 1997): 42-45.
[24] "Milwaukee Historic Ethnic Architecture Resources Study," (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Department of City Development, 1994).
[25] Ibid.

mayor in 1916. Ethnic Germans dominated the city from 1890, when they reached their peak as a percentage of the population until 1917. In both cases, the entry of the United States into World War I ended the influence that both the Socialists and ethnic Germans had on the city.

From an architectural standpoint, City Hall also reached its zenith by 1917. Opened for business in late 1896, the unfinished areas continued to be completed in the early years of the twentieth century. As the city government settled into its new home, it inevitably had to make adjustments, swapping departments, adding features (like the fire escape) to address mechanical and safety concerns, and replacing other features that proved unworkable (such as the illuminated atrium floor at the first floor).

The space study and subsequent renovations in 1917 signify the end of the "settling-in" period and the last of the major work on the building that remained in character with the architect's original vision. Although repairs to the building from 1918 to1932 for the most part respected its architectural integrity, the building's overall historic significance had reached its peak in 1917.[26]

Conclusion

One of the largest city halls in the country, with a Common Council Chamber that likewise eclipses in size that of larger cities, Milwaukee City Hall is unique in its architecture. The product of a fierce design competition, City Hall was designed by the German-born "court architect" of Milwaukee, Henry Koch, to reflect the overwhelming influence of German culture on a city that became known as the "Deutsch-Athen" of America. The architect took as his model both German buildings, most notably the Hamburg Rathaus (city hall), and locally significant structures like the nearby Pabst Building (razed in 1980).

City Hall also was the focus of Socialism in Milwaukee and became the political prize in the Socialist's campaign to run Milwaukee on Socialist principles. The city became a symbol to other municipal Socialists across America hoping to "Milwaukeeize" their own cities. The Socialist influence remained strong enough in Milwaukee that the party would, at least nominally, hold the mayor's office for almost 50 years, long after the Socialist party in the rest of the country had dwindled into relative obscurity.

Milwaukee City Hall is significant for its unique contribution to American architecture, as the political "prize" of the Socialist party in America, and for its reflection of German culture and design in this most German of American cities. City Hall continues to be a beloved landmark for citizens of Milwaukee, and an expression of important events that shaped the political and social fabric of America.

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[26]One important caveat relating to architectural significance should be noted. The Common Council Chamber underwent an important decorative painting campaign in 1931. While this work lies outside the period of significance for the building, it should be preserved. There is no evidence that the Chamber had received any decorative painting prior to 1931, to which it could be restored. The decorative scheme represents an aesthetic completion of the Chamber that has acquired significance in its own right.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

__ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ Previously Listed in the National Register. #73000085, 14 March 1973
__ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
__ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
_X_ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #WIS-254
__ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

__ State Historic Preservation Office
__ Other State Agency
__ Federal Agency
_X_ Local Government
__ University
_X_ Other (Specify Repository): Milwaukee Public Library, Main Branch

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre

UTM References:	**Zone**	**Easting**	**Northing**
	16	425890	4765600

Verbal Boundary Description:

City Hall is located in lots 1-6 in Block 55 of the Plat of Milwaukee of NE ¼ Section 29, Township 7 North Range 22 East. It is bounded by East Wells Street on the south, North Market Street on the east, East Kilbourn Avenue on the north, and North Water Street on the east.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries include the entire city block on which the Milwaukee City Hall has historically stood.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: QUINN EVANS | ARCHITECTS

Address: 219 ½ North Main Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Telephone: 734-663-5888

Date: May 18, 2004

Edited by: Carolyn Pitts and Patty Henry
National Park Service
National Historic Landmarks Survey
1849 C St., N.W. (2280)
Washington, DC 20240

Telephone: (215) 597-8875 and (202) 354-2216

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